

VZCZCXYZ0003
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #4844/01 2831453
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 101453Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1938
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6313
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4128
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2712
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7314
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1330
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4694
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0910
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7045

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 004844

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Post-war Maneuvering, MEPP,
President Assad's interviews, Lebanon, (10/06 -10/10)

¶1. Summary: The Syrian press focused on the following issues
October 6-9:

All government-owned papers published the full texts of the
interviews which President Assad gave to the BBC on October 9 and
to Kuwaiti daily al-Anbaa on October 7. They focused on the
President's accusation that the US is dividing the Arab world
into extremists and moderates. Assad said Syria does not put
itself in either camp; it is with all the Arabs.

Assad said the peace decision is not in Israel now but in
Washington. He said no matter how strong armies may be, they
cannot do anything unless issues are solved politically. He said
it is always a good time for peace.
Assad said he is in charge of the country, but he consults people
around him.

He said that his priorities are stability, economics and Arab
solidarity. He said one must expect an Israeli attack "at any
moment." He said that almost 80 percent of the disputes between
Israel and Syria have been resolved, but "sometimes the final one
percent can put an end to the entire process."

He said Syria seeks resumption of the role of the Saudi-Egyptian-
Syrian axis in supporting Arab issues, stressing that he did not
believe that the eight Arab countries who conferred in Egypt last
week were plotting against Syria.

Papers also covered the visit of Qatar's Minister of Foreign
Affairs Hamad Bin Jabr Al Thani, who discussed the latest
developments in the Palestinian Territories with President Assad.
Assad also received a Libyan envoy, who delivered a letter from
the Libyan leader on the latest developments in regional affairs.

Papers also reported President Assad's visit to the Industrial
Zone of Aleppo, but focused especially on his meeting with a UAE
economic delegation, headed by Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Mr.
Mohamad Karakawi. The papers hailed the Minister's visit, which,
they said, will open new horizons for investment in Syria.

Syrian papers accused the US of intending to divide Iraq. They

quoted the British Sunday Times as saying that an independent commission headed by the ex-Secretary of State James Baker will propose to the US Congress that Iraq be divided into three regions.

The Syrian press published a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior that the gunmen who attacked the U.S. Embassy in Syria last month were not affiliated with any external terrorist group.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

President Assad: Washington doesn't have the vision for peace (government-owned al-Baath, October 10, 2006)

President Assad: The decision to make peace is not in Israel anymore but in Washington (government-owned Tishreen, October 10, 2006)

President Assad: Our priorities are stability, economy and Arab solidarity (government-owned al-Thawra, October 8, 2006)

President Assad: We are accused of being too Arab (government-owned Tishreen, October 9, 2006)

Washington seriously considers dividing Iraq (government-owned Tishreen, October 9, 2006)

Two messages to President Assad, from UAE's President and Libyan Leader (government-owned al-Thawra, October 6, 2006)

President Assad reviews with Karkawi the reality of investment in Syria (government-owned Tishreen, October 9, 2006)

President Assad receives a phone call from Zapatero on the Spanish contribution to UNIFIL (government-owned Tishreen, October 7, 2006)

Mrs. Asmaa al-Assad inaugurates a photographic exhibition at the Danish Institute (government-owned Tishreen, October 9, 2006)

Investigations of the attack on the US Embassy conclude: the group has no connections with outside organizations (government-owned al-Thawra, October 6, 2006)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Is Syria Extremist?"

Abdul Fatah Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned al Thawra, wrote (October 9, 2006)

"In the unipolar age, there is now what looks like a competition to show loyalty to 'Uncle Sam' and a race to please him. But the big crisis...is that this contradicts not only the interests of the countries that walk behind the 'bull' but also the interests of the regimes themselves."

"That's why refusing to follow the wrong path is characterized as 'radicalism,' and refusal to commit suicide as 'extremism.' This image has been portrayed as a matter of fact, in comparison to the concessions which others are making, making those who stick to their rights look as if they were radicals."

"However, we are now seeing calls by Arabs and Europeans for a return to the core of the problem, in order to find a comprehensive solution and to revive the peace process that was assassinated by the Israeli aggressiveness, supported by US arrogance."

"So, Is Syria extremist...? If demanding the return of the

Golan Heights is extremism, OK! We are very extremist."

"The Rosary of the War against Terrorism Falls Apart"

Jihad Bakfalouni, an op-ed writer in government-owned al-Thawra, wrote: (10/10/2006)

"Bush still insists that he has made the right decision [to wage his war against terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq.] In addition, he still insists upon the secret of divine inspiration, which guided him to fulfill the divine will to light the war against terrorism, a war that only he believed to be a sacred war.

"The US President refuses to tell us of what happens between him and his God every night before he goes to bed.... However, we do not need him to tell us because we know the content of the letter from its address.

"The main thing in this content is that the Bush plan to invade the burrow of terrorism and kill its enraged dragon has fallen apart, because terrorism has received random blows that have not exterminated it, but, rather, made it more powerful and solid.

"A CIA report indicated that the war against terrorism has failed to contain terror, has made security inside the US a remote wish, and has added to the numbers of those who hate Washington. And perhaps President Bush - whether on purpose or

not - poured oil on the fire when he unleashed a fierce campaign against Muslims, describing them as fascists, which made the list of those people even longer.

"Security has not been achieved in the land of freedom.... And Afghanistan and Iraq have not become two flourishing oases of democracy....

"so how will Bush face this? Whom will he blame for this? Richard Pearl? Donald Ramsfield? Or Condoleezza Rice? Aren't all of them the devils who beautified this Satanic idea and encouraged him to commit the sin of invading Iraq and Afghanistan?

"Every effort President Bush makes will simply be a waste of time.... And this will only bring more hatred to the shores of the United States, eliminating the Bush achievements, that will just vanish without leaving a vestige."

Corbin